

Certified Forage Tidbits

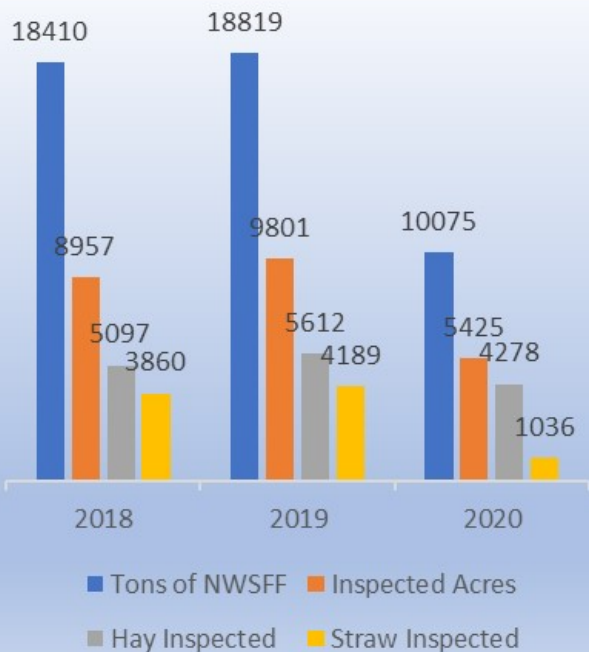
Seasonal Summary of the Montana Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage Program
ISSUE 06 FEBRUARY 2021



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2020 Certified Forage Season Summary



After each growing season, the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF) Program analyzes the number of acres inspected by field inspectors. The graph shows the season end summary for the past three years. This growing season saw a sharp decline compared to the last several years. Participating producers dropped from 169 to 135, with 27 new producers joining the program up from 9 new producers in 2019. There were ten certified pellet producers and two certified wattle producers.

Certified Hay Production:

4,278 acres inspected
4,156 acres certified
8,867 tons produced

Certified Straw Production:

1,055 acres inspected
1,036 acres certified
1,208 tons produced

Certified Forage Producers:

135 producers participated
184 total inspections
11 certified pellet/wattle plants

Certified Weed Free Gravel Update

Montana Department of Agriculture is heading to the legislature this year in hopes of expanding the Noxious Weed Free Certification Program. HB93, sponsored by Rep. Kenneth Walsh, gives MDA authority to certify materials beyond forage as “weed free”. If the bill is successful, the Department will begin working with industry, counties, and MSU Extension to establish rules for voluntary certification programs of materials like gravel and mulch. Montana will also partner with the North American Invasive Species Management Association, who has established national standards for gravel and mulch, allowing materials to be regionally certified and extend markets outside Montana.

Contaminated gravel pits can be a huge source of weed seeds that have the potential to be spread everywhere the gravel is used and beyond. Certified fill materials will help address the need for clean construction materials in future projects on federal and state land. Currently the U.S. Forest Service “makes every effort” to prevent the accidental spread of invasive species. A state-wide program will increase the availability of local supplies and allow land managers to confidently source weed-free materials. Similar to forage, gravel certification provides added value and protection for sensitive areas.

Inspections will focus on plant materials present in gravel pits and surrounding areas and certification shall be based on a reasonable visual inspection. Certified gravel may contain viable plant seeds. Weed seed can persist for years in soil seed banks. However the presence of viable seed will diminish significantly after continuing participation in the program for more than one year.



An infested gravel pit in Ravalli County. Photo courtesy of Tom Burge

Waterhemp Found in Roosevelt County, Palmer Amaranth Getting Close

In August of this year, waterhemp (*Amaranthus tuberculatus*) was documented for the first time in Montana. First reported in Roosevelt County, waterhemp is a pigweed that can be extremely problematic. Often resistant to multiple herbicides, the dioecious plant is a prolific seed producer

with long-lived seed. The corn belt native was found in Montana along a rail line and has since moved into a neighboring wheat field. The infestation is currently limited to about 30 acres.

Palmer amaranth (*Amaranthus palmeri*), a close relative of waterhemp and another member of the pigweed family, has not yet been reported in Montana, though it is in nearby western South Dakota. It has been found as a contaminant in conservation seed mixes and travels easily on vehicles and harvest equipment. Palmer amaranth can grow 2–3 inches per day and competes aggressively with crops. Like waterhemp many populations are herbicide resistant. Identifying members of the pigweed family can be difficult (especially seedlings), but if a suspect plant is found please report it to MDA, county extension, or county weed board as soon as it's found. MSU Extension as well as other groups have identification tips and management information online.



Waterhemp, left (Iowa State University) and Palmer amaranth, right (North Dakota State University). Both have devastating potential if allowed to gain a foothold in Montana.

Transportation Certificates

Why are they important to the Forage Program?

The NWSFF program uses transportation certificates to communicate **authenticity of certification** between the producer and the consumer buying the certified forage. All forage marked with NWSFF twine (orange & blue) is required to have a transportation certificate when it is sold. REASON: This certificate documents to the consumer that the hay or straw was certified by an NWSFF Inspector and the producer is also a certified producer participating in the NWSFF Program.

The transportation certificate is a triplicate form that is issued to the certified producer by the NWSFF inspector. The NWSFF Inspector keeps the pink copy for their record, the yellow copy is for the producer and the white original is for the customer/buyer. There are three people that need to complete information on this certificate: 1) **Certified Producer** - name, signature, and certified forage information. 2) **NWSFF Inspector** - inspector information, producer ID number, and if the forage meets Montana or Regional Standards or both. 3) **Customer/Buyer** - name, address, and vehicle operator/driver's signature.

The transportation certificates are pre-numbered and serve as a trace back document if the Department of Agriculture receives a complaint on noxious weeds in the forage or forage with improper markers (twine, tags or labels). The only time a transportation certificate is not required is if a producer uses the pre-numbered tags and attaches a tag to **each bale** of hay or straw and that load remains in-state. **Certified Producers: remember to use these certificates to maintain program integrity!**

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Montana Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage (NWSFF)
TRANSPORTATION CERTIFICATE

This forage meets the Noxious Weed Seed Free Forage requirements of:
☐ Montana Department of Agriculture ☐ North American Weed Free Forage Standards

CERTIFIED PRODUCER INFORMATION: Name: _____ Producer ID Number: MT - _____ Producer's/Seller's Signature: _____	CERTIFIED FORAGE INFORMATION: Forage Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Alfalfa <input type="checkbox"/> Alfalfa/Grass <input type="checkbox"/> Grass <input type="checkbox"/> Sainfoin <input type="checkbox"/> Straw Package Type of Forage: _____ Marker Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Twine <input type="checkbox"/> Tags Tag #s: _____ to _____ Tonnage Transported: _____ OR Number of Bales Transported: _____ Date of Sale: _____
NWSFF INSPECTOR INFORMATION: Name: _____ ID #: _____ Field Inspection Number: _____ Year: _____	
BUYER INFORMATION: Name: _____ Address: _____ Vehicle Operator/Driver's Signature: _____ (must be signed upon receipt of certified forage)	

*Third party buyer: a person that buys certified hay or straw from a retail/feed store needs a photocopy of the original transportation certificate from the store and receipt of purchase when transporting or storing NWSFF certified forage in restricted areas.
The white copy is to be given to the buyer, the yellow stays with producer, the NWSFF inspector keeps pink for record. 6/14

Hunters! Don't Be a Vector!

Humans are the number one way noxious weeds are spread. In addition to transporting seeds in construction materials, on vehicles and equipment, and contaminated forage, weed seeds hitchhike on clothing and animals and can travel a long distance very quickly.



Taking the time to clean off seeds in the same area they were picked up and getting those seeds in the trash limits the distribu-

tion. While weed seed free forage is required on all public lands, livestock owners are highly encouraged to use certified hay any time they take their animals away from home. In Montana, hunters are fortunate to have access to over 7 million acres of private land enrolled in the Block Management Program. Respect land-owners and do your part to keep these lands productive and accessible.



Hunt on Public Lands?

Certified forage is REQUIRED!

Find certified forage products at: AGR.mt.gov

New Forage Program Coordinator

My name is Andrew Lam and I am MDA's new forage specialist. I started last August and have been soaking up everything Montana weed-related I can. My partner Carolyn and I moved to Helena from Washington, and we both couldn't be happier here. I was born and raised in Colorado and moved to Oregon in 2008 to finish school at Oregon State University. I earned a BS in Crop and Soil Science and spent the last seven years as an agronomist working in vegetable seed production in northwest Washington. I have a severe addiction to hunting and fishing, which has only gotten worse in the great state of Montana. So far the highlights have been Blackfoot River trout and Sheridan County bird hunting.

While 2020 has undoubtedly been a crazy year, we are doing everything we can to maintain our programs and promote invasive species awareness. For anything weed-free forage related do not hesitate to call or email.

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Certified Forage Benefits

Certified forage provides producers with a benefit to market a weed seed free product to forage buyers needing the certified forage for public lands, their own property, or reclamation work.

The NWSFF Program is a true weed prevention tool for keeping noxious weeds and undesirable plants out of the backcountry. As a result, certified forage is required when horses or pack animals are used on public lands in Montana.



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